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**THE
S P R I T E
OF THE
N U N N E R Y;**

**A TALE,
FROM THE SPANISH:**

**BY THE
Author of the Life of Linnæus, &c.**

IN TWO VOLUMES.

**" No circumstances are so desperate, which Providence may
not relieve." Goldsmith.**

VOL. II.

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1796.

THE
2 P R I T E

OF THE

M U - M F R

A F A L E
FROM THE STAMEN

BY THE

Author of the "Life of Lincoln," etc.

IN 1 VOLUME

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THE
SPRITE, &c.

I DID not call again upon Signora before the day preceding her departure, when I took my leave. She then informed me, that to prevent the suspicion of the Brigadier's wife, (lately Mademoiselle d'Auvergne) they would embark for *Genoa* in two different ships. I made my mother communicate this news to Lady VERNON, with the addition, that Count DE SESLE and his wife would first visit some of the Northern

Courts before they should go to make a temporary residence in *Italy*. By this necessary untruth, which was putting Lord LOVEMORE on a wrong scent, I hoped to keep the two rivals from each other, till their anger and animosity should have entirely subsided. This letter was sent off to *England* on the same day, and dated from *Seville*; my mother requested her Ladyship to direct her answer to be left at *Lalabora*, where she would be in a very short time. The Count of ALCADOS had actually some relations there, and we always thought it best to reside in the neighbourhood of the province of *Castile*.

I never

I never went on so tedious a journey as that to *Lalabora*; travelling is of itself extremely inconvenient in Spain; the discovery of *America* has depopulated all her provinces, and the regular communication between the major part of them has ceased. Those long deserts filled my mind with melancholy ideas. The gloomy and misanthropic character of the Spaniards takes, indeed, its origin in those solitary wilds, and finds plenty of subjects to foster and propagate itself.

At *Fuentes* I enquired if the Countess of Montalva and her daughter were not there, but the inhabitants informed me
D that

that they had gone to *Taracena*, on their return to *Madrid*. Our road too led us to *Taracena*, but being told they had left *Fuentes* a month ago, we hardly expected to find them there. On our way to *Saragossa*, we met the Marquis of *LERIDA*, accompanied by his valet.— He called me aside, and conjured me not to discover to any body that I had seen him, as he had secretly returned from *France* to see his mistress at *Taracena*, against the will and knowledge of his father, who was ill at *Toledo*. Mysterious as his appearance was to me, I promised him to keep the profoundest silence.

Young

Young Lerida had taken his route to Spain, over the Pyrenees through *Navarre*, that he might better avoid a discovery ; he told me he had met with no kind of interruption on his way, till a few hours previous to our meeting.— He continued his journey through *Saragossa*, while we took a shorter way to *Taracona*. My wish now was, to find the Countess of *Montalva* and Donna STELLA, and to gain some intelligence respecting this mysterious appointment. On my arrival at *Taracona*, I found it difficult to find out the Countess, who had good reasons to wish to remain concealed even from her most intimate friends. However, one of the most sin-

gular incidents led us to a discovery of her residence in this place.

Once returning from a walk through the town, I found a taylor's measure on the ground, and seeing a name written on it, I had the curiosity to pick it up and read the writing.

That very moment, an old woman, who had observed me for some time at a distance, accosted and asked me, if I was not the French taylor whom they had so long expected. The measure in my hand having confirmed the woman in her supposition, she added to her question, which I answered in the affirmative,

firmative, that her mistress wished much to speak, and I would do well to immediately follow her. I beckoned FREDERICK, who attended me in my excursion, to come after me, and wait before the door of the house which he should see me enter.

I was introduced into a pretty mansion, where I found a young lady in company of a person, whom I took for her lover. The lady rose to meet me on entering the room, and paying me some fine compliments on my professional cleverness, desired to know, if I could not make her a light English morning dress. I answered that I could

satisfy her very easily, as I had been in *London* for some years, and only required to know the cut, as there were different fashions to wear them.

She replied, that she should like to have it made exactly like that which Donna STELLA, the daughter of the Countess of *Montalva*, had on the preceding day, in the orange-grove. I represented to my fair customer, that I had never seen that lady, upon which she consulted her lover, how they should contrive to get me to have a sight of her.

"That's

“ That’s the difficulty,” answered he, “ you know the news received this morning from *Saragossa*, of the Marquis of LERIDA’s arrest by an express order from the court; the ladies will now immediately return to Madrid to solicit his release, and it is thought, they will no more appear in any public place during the remainder of their stay among us.”

The young lady, who seemed to be a little vexed, then told me in good Spanish: “ Make the dress in the newest modish stile, I trust to your abilities, and beg you to remember, that I insist on wearing it in public

“ before the Countess and her daughter set out for Madrid.”

I took measure, and promised to execute the order on the very next day. I left the house, delivered the stuff to Frederick, shewed it my mother, and both of us set about the dress, that the lady might have it by the time I promised. I was punctual to the minute, and the lady seemed quite charmed with her new attire. As she was very talkative and fond of chat, I gradually turned the conversation upon the Countess of Montalva.

I col-

I collected from what she said, that the Countess had appointed the Marquis secretly to meet them there, to be married in a clandestine manner to Donna STELLA. But the bridegroom's father keeping emissaries to watch the conduct of his son, obtained a royal order of arrest against him from the prime minister of state. Thus all the schemes of the *Montalva* family were defeated by the vigilance of the Duke of *Lerida*; I was pleased with this news, and took leave of the young lady, without hopes of ever seeing her again.

The sensations which my mother and I felt at this event, were of a very different kind. My mother rejoiced at the failure of a blow, which would at once have destroyed the fairest hopes of herself and her friend; I accused fate, to have thrown an obstacle in the way of an intrigue, that would have rid me of a suitor, who became daily more insupportable to me. I did not however renounce the hope of drawing some advantage from that adventure, and prudently concealing my sentiments from my mother, I only wished for an interview with Donna STELLA, expecting then to find some materials for a new plan.

On

On this account I went the next day to visit the family, and the servants knowing me again, I was immediately introduced to the ladies. The Countess looked very melancholy, and Donna STELLA sat melting in tears. After the usual compliments had passed, and informed that I had been at *Paris*, the first thing they asked me was: if I had not seen young *Lerida* there? I answered, that I had seen him not only at *Paris*, but quite recently on the road to *Saragossa*.

“ Ah !” exclaimed the Countess;
“ had he never set foot on the ground
“ of

“of that city, he would not now be in
“endurance vile!”

“What? Under arrest,” cried I
with surprise. They wanted to make
me believe the truth of this occurrence,
and having asked them what could have
been the motive, they soon explained
all. The whole story of the intended
marriage, and the method of its being
frustrated, were now brought to light.
Many women need only be touched in
a certain point, and you will make
them part with all their secrets.

Who would not have tried to console
them in such distress? I gave them
several

several broad hints, that they still had means enough left to make themselves amends for this misfortune. They saw nothing but difficulties, but I told them I could see none; I quoted several instances to convince them that a good head, time and money, can do wonders; and that though a stranger myself, I begged them to accept my services, persuaded they would soon experience the utility of them.

They were quite charmed with my offers, and gave me liberty to act as I should think proper. From the first moment I saw them, I had planned my new stratagem, and they thought themselves

selves that I meant to contrive the Marquis's escape, which they very much wished. My design was, however, of a quite different kind, and I took my leave of them soon after, strongly recommending patience and discretion.

My mother could not help laughing at the confidence they reposed in me, and sarcastically observed, that they could not have fallen into *better* hands. We now set off for LALAHORA, where we met with the friendliest reception from the friends of the Count of ALCADOS, and found letters both from him and Lady VERNON. The former apprised

apprised us of the indisposition of the Duke of LERIDA, arising from the obstinacy of his son, and of his having been obliged to go to *Toledo* for his recovery. The latter wrote, that, regardless of all her intreaties and arguments, her brother and Mr. Sheldon had both taken their departure to Spain.

Unoccupied and abandoned to myself, I endeavoured by all kind of illusions to render agreeable my stay at *Lalabora*, till some decisive moment should again call me forth into action. The future, exhibited a rare confusion to my amazed mind, and there was no cal-

calculating any events that were to happen. The best thing in the world I could do, was, no doubt, to preserve that equilibrium, usually called presence of mind. I scrutinized keenly every thing that was going forward about me without caring for consequences, and laboured underhand to create changes, quite indifferent to their issue. Thus I had leisure to contrive measures, and I did not miss all the opportunities it afforded.

Among the multifarious acquaintances we formed through the friendship of our host, a young lady, of the name of Donna BLANCA, the daughter of

of one of our neighbours, attracted the whole of my attention. She was always very serious, and absorbed in a kind of deep melancholy. I, too, had my share of sorrows, and passed many a gloomy hour. This similarity of condition attracted us towards each other. The outward signs of sexual difference made her at first very shy and reserved in her conduct to me, but soon finding, that I was a person that would run every risk out of friendship to her, she unboomed herself without the least hesitation. It is the loveliest feature in the national character of the Spaniards, that they devote themselves entirely as soon as they begin to conceive an attachment

tachment for a person. Nobody knows better than them the virtue of friendship in its noblest and purest degree, and I feel happy, on this occasion, to raise here a small monument to some of my male and female friends, who have loved me with unabated kindness and enthusiasm for a series of years.

Donna BLANCA loved Don Cesar, a young officer, descended from one of the most respectable families in the kingdom, who, in his turn, loved her almost to distraction. The parents of both were determined to stifle their flame on account of the disparity of rank between them : those of the lady

con-

considered it as an impossibility, that Don Cesar should ever marry their daughter, and though they respected him for his various excellent qualities, yet they were glad to see the connexion between him and their daughter interrupted, by the orders he received to join his regiment for six months. They fancied, that absence would likewise cure in a very short time the malady of their daughter.

But in this they were mistaken ; for absence served but to render stronger the links of that passion which united the hearts of the tender pair. Donna BLANCA thought I was in the same pre-

predicament, and in this supposition, made me joint depository of the secrets of her heart. Our friendship rose to such a pitch of boundless confidence, as could never have subsisted between two persons whose sex should in reality have been different. Her parents imagined that this new connexion would gradually revive the former gaiety of their darling child, and they did all they could to encourage it.

Don CESAR kept up an exact and regular correspondence with the object of his affections, and informed her of every trifling incident that occurred to him each day. Donna BLANCA told me,

me, by the bye, that we were not the only unhappy lovers, and that the Marquis of LERIDA himself was immured in the castle of *Saragoſſa* on account of some tender attachment, and that Don CESAR, who was in garrison there, had written all the particulars to her in his last. I feigned to be very much shocked at this account, and declared that the lady I loved, was a relation of that young nobleman, and that I was very anxious to learn every particular of his present situation, merely for her sake. Donna BLANCA then shewed me her lover's letter, and promised to write to him, to send her all such farther details as I should desire,

or

or he be able to obtain, respecting the unfortunate young Marquis.

She actually sent off her letter, and received a very circumstantial and satisfactory answer on the following day. Don CESAR informed her, that young LERIDA's confinement was very easy and indulgent, and that the greatest hardship he suffered, was not to be allowed any company to visit him from without the citadel. Don CESAR concluded very obligingly by declaring himself ready to convey any letter or written intelligence to the noble prisoner, without being afraid of committing a breach of his trust. I begged

Donna

Donna BLANCA to acquaint him, that I would avail myself of his kind offer, at the very first opportunity.

While I was considering how to benefit myself by so singular a concurrence of circumstances, my mother received a letter from the Count of ALCADOS, inviting us to return as expeditiously as possible to Toledo. He requested us likewise to be as secret as possible, and begged of me to bring some ladies clothes with me, to wear them for a few moments only, and in the presence of his most intimate friends.

I found the latter part of his request very inconsistent, with his wish, to make me pass for dead. A thousand disturbing ideas entered into my head, and I felt myself buffeted by scruples and doubts. What could all this mean? I approached *Toledo*, trembling with apprehension, and the only thing which consoled me in the Count of Alcados's letter, was that part wherein he mentioned, his having written to our host of *Lalabora*, that we would soon come back again to his house. This was also the only thing which consoled our friends and acquaintances at our sudden and abrupt departure.

As

As soon as we entered the province of *Castile*, we only travelled by night to prevent a discovery. We reached *Toledo* at midnight, and put up at a house which the Count had pointed out to us in his letter. Here we found his steward, whom we first saw at the castle of *Marna*, and who supplied us with every luxury the place would afford.

Early in the morning, the Count of *ALCADOS* visited us at breakfast, and lavished a thousand caresses, and the appellation of *sweet and only daughter*, upon me as usual. "The Duke of *LERIDA*," added he, "who still continues here indisposed, and despairs

“ of outliving the grief with which the
“ conduct of an undutiful son has
“ overwhelmed him, could not resist
“ the desire of an interview with his
“ future daughter-in-law. I hope
“ therefore, my dear girl, you will do
“ me the favour, to comply with our
“ conjoint request.”

At first I felt quite alarmed at this proposal, and was at a loss to divine how all this would terminate. I was certain of young LERIDA's partiality to Donna STELLA, and equally sure that no change could be effected in that quarter. I was even under a kind of obligation to the lady; my heart bore
a quite

a quite different image, and the torrent of its sensations tore along with it, all the duties, and nicer considerations of the desire of my mother and benefactor. Thus I became the sport of a multitude of contradictory sensations.

Notwithstanding all those shocks, my spirits did not succumb so far as to make me lose that equanimity, which I had laid down as the most sacred duty in all kind of emergencies. I accepted the Count's proposal with readiness and gratitude, promised to use my utmost endeavours to do him honour, and to please my intended father-in-law,

and passed the remainder of the day before the glass and the toilet.

The Marquis received me with visible rapture; he protested by a solemn oath, that the sole wish of his heart was, that his son might thus see me in the lustre of all my charms, and he was sure his mind would soon change. He told me a thousand flattering things, and rousing my very womanly heart to a sense of my own value and importance, furnished me with additional means of vanquishing the embarrassments of my situation. So tender was he to his new found daughter, as to appear in those moments

moments a hundred times more amiable than his son.

In the height of his admiration of my person, he signified, that nothing would more effectually contribute to change the sentiments of his son, than my presence at *Saragossa*. Experienced as he had the natural fickleness of his character, he would pledge himself, that nothing could resist the impression I should make upon him.

Fain would I have been excused from such a commission; I represented to the Duke, that as his son had frequently seen me in man's clothes, I was rather

doubtful, whether my appearance in female attire would produce so sudden and violent a revolution in his feelings.

He thought this remark quite immaterial, and was of opinion, that I ought to make it a merit, to have followed him every where in disguise, as it were entirely out of love to him. I started several other objections, but he waved them all by his ingenious arguments. At a loss to find out a single one more, that would not have made him question my sincerity, I ultimately complied with his desire.

The

The aversion I felt to being united with the young Marquis of LERIDA, made me strain all the powers of my inventive genius for means of combining all those contradictory circumstances, without trespassing in any respects, the limits of my promises and obligations. In this view, I wrote to Donna STELLA to send me a letter for her lover, to advise him, not to neglect the first opportunity I should give him to make his escape, and to inform him of the place, where she and her mother would wait for him to join them. I begged Donna STELLA to place every confidence in my sincerity and zeal, and to address her answer to be left for

me with Donna BLANCA DE SANGOS,
at *Lalabora*.

The following night, I began my journey to *Saragossa*, after the Count of Alcados had given me the pleasing assurance, that the Marquis of VILLAHERMOSA had paid him in great haste the annual pension of my mother, observing, that he did not wish to have any thing to do with the dead. My apparition at the dancer's at Barcelona had terrified him to such a degree, that, convinced as he was of my death, he did not make the least difficulty now, to execute and fulfil punctually all the dispositions of his mother's last will.

My

My benefactor jocosely added, that, in order to keep the Marquis to his duty, nothing more was wanting than to repeat, from time to time, those apparitions. I fully coincided with him in this assertion, and the great success with which I had always acted the part of a ghost, fired my fancy to such a degree on the road, that I resolved to repeat it again, in the nunnery near *Ulloa*, which I was obliged to pass by: I was sure, that the pious sisters would represent the occurrence at *Madrid*, as a most awful and terrific spectacle.

On my arrival in the town, I put on the same dress, in which I had once appeared

peared to the Countess d'Auvergne at Paris. My long white robe was floating down to the ground, and only fastened by a black girdle below the bosom; I wound a garland of flowers about my head, and daubing my face with powder, gave it a most ghastly appearance. Then I muffled myself up in a long cloak, put on a large Castilian hat, repaired to the cloister, and under the specious pretence of wishing to speak to the Lady Abbess, and calling myself the Marquis of *Villabermosa*, got instantly admitted into a parlour (exclusively) destined for the reception of people of quality. I took off cloak and hat, and pulling a crucifix out of my

my

my pocket, stationed myself, armed with the emblem of faith, at the entrance of the door which communicated to the nunnery. The Lady Abbess, accompanied by two young novices, no sooner opened it, than she fell down quite convulsed with terror, while her young companions fled and left her senseless on the floor. With all imaginable coolness and composure, I again put on my hat and cloak, and strutted away with all the pompousness of a Spanish grandee.

Having joined my mother, who was waiting for me at the inn, we set out in a few minutes, entertaining each other,
all

all the way, with the probable sensation, which the story of my apparition in the convent of *Ulloa* would excite at Madrid. We knew our people, and were certain of the effects of the stratagem.

Our host at LALAHORA received us with the liveliest demonstrations of joy. Donna BLANCA and her parents also gave me unequivocal proofs of the gladness they felt at my return. Don CESAR had written her a letter, purporting, that LERIDA's confinement would doubtless be a long one, as he had been removed to the strongest part in the interior of the citadel ; he added :
that

that the prisoner was taking great pains to make the officers who guarded him his friends, but that he (Don CESAR) avoided all his friendly and confidential advances with the greatest caution, in order to serve him the more safely at a proper opportunity.

I received likewise two letters from *Madrid*, the one from Donna STELLA for young LERIDA, containing exactly the particulars I wished her to give him; the other from the Countess her mother, who returned me a thousand thanks for my generous intention, assuring me of the protection of the Marquis of Villahermosa, her nephew, who would not fail

fail to remunerate the services I was about to render to her family. She concluded by observing, that she had not yet acquainted her nephew with our design, because she was anxious to preserve that profound secrecy which I had so strongly recommended to her. She informed me, in the same manner as her daughter did young Lerida, that the latter should find them at *Huera*, a small burgh at the foot of the Alps, between Saragossa and Fuentes, and that she expected me to favour her with farther instructions, as soon as they should be arrived at *Fuentes*.

My

My mother received at the same time a letter from Mrs. COLLINSON, at *Barcelona*, who mentioned, by way of news, the sudden return of Brigadier DE FORGES (Count DE SESLE) from *Genoa*, to which his lady had forced him, on discovering his adulterous amours with the Italian dancer. This intelligence made me apprehensive, lest Lord LOVEMORE should accidentally meet the Count at *Barcelona*; my mother dreaded the same sinister event, and in our perplexity we found no other means than that of writing two anonymous letters, to keep each party at the place where they were.— Mrs. COLLINSON, much to our comfort, informed us, that Count DE SESLE would

would remain at *Barcelona* till after the delivery of his spouse, who was then pregnant, and Mr. SHELDON stated that Lord LOVEMORE had formed several acquaintances since his arrival at *Madrid*; amongst others that of Donna STELLA, daughter of the Countess of *Montalva*, who had made him forget all his plans of revenge. He farther added, that having lately introduced those ladies to the Count of ALCADOS, who lately arrived there, this Nobleman had entirely convinced them of MIRA's death, though they would not believe in her recent and third appearance at the Convent of *Ulloa*, which was then the general topic of conversation in the metropolis.

My

My situation was now more labyrinthic than ever. Wherever I cast my eyes, they were bewildered with a maze of inextricable difficulties. My mother and the Count of Alcados both agreed to give me a husband, whom I could not like ; to deliver the latter, nay, even to make him fall in love with me, I had respectively pledged my word to the Duke of Lerida, on the one hand, and to the Countess of MONTALVA on the other ; Donna STELLA was propitious to my secret designs, but she depended on a rigorous mother, and it was probable that the latter would make her soon disposed to receive the homage of the impassionate Lord LOVEMORE, who,

at

at the same time, was the idol of my heart. I could not conceive how I should emerge out of such chaos of difficulties, and what made it worse still, I found myself wholly abandoned to them, without a single friend or adviser.

After having most maturely deliberated upon the conduct I meant to pursue under these circumstances, I wrote a letter to the Countess of MONTALVA, informing her, that the execution of my plan absolutely required her most speedy departure for *Fuentes*, that she might immediately be at hand, in case of necessity. As fortune would have it, the new connection with his Lordship was
either

either not ripe enough to have occasioned a declaration on his part, or the Countess thought it best to prefer a certainty to that which still appeared very dubious; in a word, my letter had the desired effect, that she left *Madrid* quite precipitately with Donna STELLA, pretending that the sultriness of the climate rendered a more temperate residence in the vicinity of the Pyrenees necessary for their health.

The sudden disappearance of the Montalva family from the capital, gave some umbrage to the Duke of LERIDA, who was going to urge me to finish my expedition to Saragossa, when Lord

LOVE-

LOVEMORE, at a loss how to pass his time after the departure of Donna STELLA from *Madrid*, on the invitation of the Count of ALCADOS, made a ceremonial visit to his Grace in his palace, and thus diverted him, for some time, from all other thoughts. This procured us a sort of immediate influence upon his Lordship, and the Count of ALCADOS gradually banished from his Lordship's mind his vindictive purpose against his rival.

The very courteous and sincere welcome which Lord LOVEMORE received at *Toledo*, the pains which were taken to please him, and to prolong his stay at
Lerida-

Lerida-palace, made me very easy about every difficulty he might have created to derange my plan to serve Donna STELLA, and I now began to occupy myself with the likeliest means of delivering her captive lover. In the first place, I informed him to explore the most favourable spot to effect his escape, and to give me notice of it. I went to Saragossa, where I made it a chief point in the execution of my enterprise, that every suspicion respecting the escape should not fall upon me, but on Donna STELLA.

Remaining, therefore, disguised in the environs of that city, I took every
means

means to explore the secret avenues of the Castle, and the likeliest manner of getting off the young Marquis. The citadel, in which he was confined, was a half-decayed monument of Moorish architecture. A deep ditch, immediately below the window of his apartment, had been converted into a garden, which formed a communication with a churchyard, by means of a ruinous subterranean passage. The number of centinels was very considerable, but if the Marquis could have found an opportunity to let himself down into the cultivated ditch, by a rope, and without being observed, there was hopes of getting him

him off by bribing the soldiers posted in this quarter.

This plan actually succeeded. The Countess and Donna STELLA were hid in an adjacent hovel ; they received the fugitive, who being immediately married, took flight with his spouse towards the Pyrenees. I returned to a villa in the neighbourhood of the Castle, belonging to a relation of Donna BLANCA, and made my public entry into *Saragossa*, dressed as a lady, the morning after the Marquis's escape.

As I had letters of recommendation from Court, addressed to Don PALOS,

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the Governor, who was required to let me have free ingress and regress to see the prisoner, and converse with him, I desired an immediate introduction to his Excellency. I found that the Duke of **LERIDA** had previously written to him on the subject of my coming, and he received me with marks of the greatest respect and politeness.

After the customary salutations, I evinced to Don **PALOS** a fervent desire of seeing the young Marquis, and he immediately gave orders to the Commanding Officer to escort me to the citadel.

The

The prisoner usually locked himself in at night, on which account his flight had not been perceived. The officer gave a gentle knock at his door, but nobody stirring, even after he had given several loud raps, the Don began to smell a rat ; finding also that the bribed centinels had left their post, and deserted, the alarm became general, the door was forced open, and they discovered that the young Marquis was gone. The surprise which this singular concurrence of circumstances excited throughout the city of Saragossa, was universal ; but not a shadow of suspicion fell upon me, as I arrived there only the morning after the escape, and several reports prevailed

of the Countess of Montalva's having been seen in the environs previous to the prisoner's flight.

I sent an account of the whole affair to Count ALCADOS and my mother, representing the details in a light most favourable to my wishes.

On my return to *Lalabora*, I found my mother quite disconsolate at my having lost the young Marquis of LERIDA, whose disobedience, she said, would bring his father's grey hair to an untimely grave.

“ Never

“ Never,” exclaimed she, with a deep sigh, “ shall I have it in my power
“ to procure you so advantageous a
“ match as that which the Count of
“ ALCADOS had in contemplation. He,
“ too, is rapidly advancing to the de-
“ cline of life, and his death must na-
“ turally expose us to a thousand ills.”

“ And what ills,” replied I, “ should
“ we have to dread? Have not we a
“ settled annual income, of which the
“ Marquis of VILLAHERMOSA has pro-
“ mised to keep up the payment? I
“ must intreat you, mother, not to
“ make yourself in the least uneasy
“ about getting me a husband. Good

“ men are so scarce, indeed, and my
“ wants so very few, that I do not wish
“ to exchange the liberties of a single
“ life for the constraints of wedlock.”

“ I cannot find fault with your argu-
“ ments, child ; but you do not know
“ the extent of my solicitude.”

“ And how should I? Since the ob-
“ scure hint you have given me in *Lon-*
“ *don* respecting my birth, you have not
“ disclosed any of its secrets to me.—
“ You can neither upbraid me with in-
“ discreet curiosity, as I have never
“ since importuned you for any farther
“ confidential discovery.”

“ Only

“ Only make yourself happy for the
“ present. The time will come, dear
“ Mira, when you shall know the whole
“ secret, which my love for you has
“ hitherto made me conceal. It is no
“ fault of yours that you lost the young
“ Marquis, and I am very glad to find
“ it so : in my opinion, the only match
“ that would suit you, would be Lord
“ LOVEMORE, and to promote it, I
“ place great confidence in the friendly
“ offices of Lady VERNON. I will com-
“ municate these thoughts to Mr.
“ SHELDON and the Count of Alcados ;
“ if they coincide with me on the sub-
“ ject, we will soon project a rational
“ plan to accomplish our mutual
“ wishes.”

D 4

I advised

I advised my mother not to be too rash, nor to take any steps that might endanger or violate female decorum. But in fact my heart was almost bursting for joy ; I saw myself flattered in my best hopes, and the liveliest prospects of forthcoming happiness rose every where in my sight.

I was now certain that my father was a man of quality, since after the loss of young LERIDA, they thought no other match would suit me than Lord Love-more. I also foresaw the difficulties which would be made by his Lordship and his sister, if the mystery of my birth were not cleared up to my satisfaction,

faction, before a union of this kind should take place.

At this interval Mrs. COLLINSON informed us, in a letter, of the premature death of the Countess DE SESLE at Barcelona, in consequence of a miscarriage, and of the departure of her dissipated husband for *Madrid*, in company of Signora PINI, the Italian dancer. I lamented the loss of that amiable young creature, and felt my apprehensions, lest Lord Lovemore should discover the widowed Count in the capital, return as powerfully as formerly. My mother, equally alarmed, left it to me to chuse any measures to prevent that long dreaded *rencontre*.

A fresh incident served to enlarge the sphere of my operations, which was, the Duke of LERIDA's wish to have me in his palace, to raise his spirits by my lively conversation. That I might remain the more unknown to the Marquis of VILLAHERMOSA, or any other unwelcome visitor, the Count of Alcados proposed that I should wait on the Duke, in the regimentals of an officer recommended to his Grace, and to trust, in other respects, to the alteration which three years time, and the constant habit of being in men's clothes, had effected in my features and deportment. My mother would not but with difficulty consent to be separated from her
darling

darling daughter, but at last she was obliged to yield to the persuasion and prayers of her friends. I took my leave of her with a thousand tears of tender regret at this temporary parting, and left her in the company of Donna BLANCA, our common friend.

Mrs. HEPBURN had given me a letter, which she begged me to deliver to the Count of ALCADOS. Perpetually occupied with the mystic circumstances of my concealed parentage, I felt an insuperable longing to open the seal of the letter. I was almost positive I should find in it some, if not the whole, of the eclairsissements so long wished for.—

But how could I, without destroying the consciousness of honour and honesty, violate the sacred trust of epistolary correspondence ?

Lost in this consideration, I pryed into the space between the folds of the letter, and perceived that, by bending them a little, I might easily decypher the whole of its contents. Trying therefore the experiment, I found in it the following lines :

“ My Lord,

“ In compliance with your request,

“ I send you your MIRA, whom I call

“ YOURS, only to commend her the more

“ effectually

“ effectually to your kindness. I am,
“ however, in hopes that you will soon
“ restore her to me, and not forget the
“ promise you have made to her mother,
“ never to separate her from me,
“ even if you were to give her a husband,
“ band, &c.”

These few lines were mysterious enough to puzzle my understanding. “ So I
“ am, perhaps,” said I to myself, “ the
“ daughter of Count ALCADOS, who,
“ doubtless, had his reasons for permitting me to consider him as my
“ father; and Mrs. HEPBURNE does
“ not appear to be my mother, and to
“ have told me an untruth.” These
anxious

anxious doubts tormented me all along the journey.

I was received with every mark of honour and respect at *Toledo*, and introduced as a Livonian Nobleman to the Duke of *Lerida*. I acted my part in a masterly manner. All *Toledo* was convinced of the truth of my pretensions, and I had great hopes of spreading my influence more and more, under my disguise.

F Meanwhile, I was very disagreeably surprised at the arrival of the Countess of Montalva, which might have occasioned a discovery. I judged it therefore

fore expedient to get the start of her, by waiting on her at her apartments. She was astonished to find in the present favourite of the Duke of LERIDA, who she thought was to supply the place of his disobedient son, no other but his deliverer. Being, however, under many obligations to me, and well convinced that I would render all possible good offices to the young Marquis, she vowed me the most inviolable secrecy.

On this occasion, she related to me, that she had left Lord LOVEMORE and the Marquis of VILLAHERMOSA in company together at *Sumentha*, a town situate on the road to *France*, but both
would,

would, in a very short time, return to Madrid. Nothing was easier than their meeting the Count DE SESLE there. I was very much agitated, and quite at a loss to find out a remedy to prevent it, had not the Duke of LERIDA, to whom I represented myself as a friend of Lord Lovemore's sister, promised me his assistance.

All these precautions however proved useless. Count DE SESLE had accompanied the Signora to *Madrid*, where he met with the Marquis of VILLAHERMOSA, her late gallant. The intrigues of the dancer and their mutual jealousy induced them to fight a duel.

The

The Marquis received a bad wound in his side, and remained for dead on the spot.

This affair caused a great deal of bustle. The Count DE SESLE was publicly named as the party who almost killed the Marquis, and to elude the hand of justice he was about to make his escape, when Lord LOVEMORE, who had heard of the business, stopped and attacked him. The Count unfortunately remained dead on the field, on firing the first round.

His Lordship was now in great danger of being prosecuted, but the influence

ence of the family of *Villahermosa* at court, prevented all farther consequences, and the whole affair was hushed up.

At this period a new change took place at *Madrid*. Lord LOVEMORE had followed the Marquis to his villa, where his wound being cured, some dangerous abscesses broke out, which obliged him to remove his residence to some other place. He again returned with his Lordship and Mr. Sheldon to the capital, where Sir Ralph Randall was just arrived. The discourse fell upon the deceased MIRA, and the latter swore to have seen me when passing through

through *Toledo*. Lord LOVEMORE flatly denied the assertion of his uncle as a moral impossibility, Sir RALPH insisted on what he had said, the dispute grew hot, and they parted in anger, firmly resolved to find out the truth.

It would have been extremely dangerous for me to have been discovered at this juncture; and Mr. SHELDON, who knew our secret, without having imparted it to his Lordship, thought it most prudent, to apprise my mother of what had happened. As I returned to *Lalabora*, I found Mr. SHELDON there, who had agreed with her to accompany
me

me to *Barcelona*, a place not likely to be visited by Sir Ralph.

I made many objections against this journey, and glowing with a desire of revenge, was not in the least afraid to meet the Knight. I was determined to chastise him at the risk of my life. I knew at the same time, that gratitude bound me not to make a single step unknown to the Duke of *LERIDA* and the Count of *ALCADOS*. I stated therefore the whole affair in a letter, and begged my mother to suspend all resolutions till an answer should arrive from *Toledo*.

The

The Duke of Lerida, unwilling to leave us a single moment in suspense, immediately on receiving the letter, sent me an invitation to come with my mother to his palace, and not make ourselves in the least uneasy. We complied with his request, and set off separately from LALAHORA, as we thought it unsafe to travel together. On her arrival my mother dressed herself in women's clothes, and by the Duke's advice I put on the regimentals of an officer in the Spanish guards. His Grace would not allow me to go abroad, but always collected a company of polite strangers to entertain me at his mansion. I treated my mother
in

in a polite but distant manner, and thus discarded every shadow of suspicion. Even the emissaries of the Marquis of Villahermosa could not discover the smallest intimacy or connection between me and Mrs. Hepburne. Nevertheless Sir RALPH persisted in his opinion of having seen me. This obstinacy roused the suspicions of the Marquis, who stopped payment of my mother's pension, till he should have obtained evident proofs of Sir Ralph's assertions being unfounded. We thought this a considerable loss, however much our benefactors exerted themselves to make us forget it.

The

The Duke, highly incensed at the Marquis's conduct, which he deemed both unjust and barbarous, was now determined to bring the matter to a summary issue. I learned, on this occasion, that my deceased benefactress had been his Grace's niece, and that the Count of ALCADOS sprang from one of the junior branches of his family. He sent public notice to the Marquis, to surrender to him, as eldest and sole heir of his house, the dowry of his late mother, which, in the opinion of the first legal authorities, had devolved to him, since the dispositions of the Marchioness's will, in favour of one Miss MIRA, had never been duly executed
and

and enforced. The Marquis was quite crest-fallen at this sudden claim, which, though it was not quite unexpected, he had, however, sought to obviate by promoting the union of Donna STELLA with his Grace's son.

It was now settled between us, that Mrs. Hepburne should go to *Madrid*, to sue the Count for non-payment of her annuity, and that I should, from motives of policy, break off all intercourse and connexion with her. The Duke took the useful precaution to order a young gentleman of my size and age, to whom he had actually procured an ensigncy in the Spanish guards, to
accom-

accompany her thither in the same regimentals which I wore.

Mrs. Hepburne's journey to *Madrid* could not remain concealed from the Marquis of VILLAHERMOSA, who still continuing very ill, was the first to hear of it by the spies he employed. He therefore appointed Sir RALPH to come and see him, for the purpose of consulting him how to act in this dilemma.

Mrs. Hepburne, accompanied by Ensign Don Pagos, had already reached the environs of the capital, when she descried a man on horseback following her from behind, whose appearance

made her very suspicious. They were both well armed, and the servants behind the carriage, told them, that the horseman they had discovered ought not to give them the least alarm. Before the next inn, they ordered the horses to stop and let the rider pass by, that they might have a full view of him.

By his dress and the method of managing his horse, my mother took him to be English. This observation filled her head with a thousand different ideas, and it struck her at last, to have seen him at Sir Ralph's. She opened her mind to Don PAGOS, who seemed
not

not in the least degree intimidated. This made her recover her spirits ; and a moment after the rider disappeared, and kept out of sight till they stopped for dinner at another inn, where they found him in the hall, with three other men, whom every thing shewed to be Spaniards. Shortly after their entrance, the adventurer, whom she now discovered to be English, began to pick a quarrel with his bottle companions over a game at whist, and it seemed every moment as if they would go to logger-heads. Don PAGOS, the Spanish officer, endeavoured to pacify them, but the Englishman, more embittered than the rest, threw the cards in his face, and

offered to box him, crying: "D——n
" you, what business have you to in-
" terfere with men?"

The officer, whose spirit could not brook the insult, gave the aggressor a sound drubbing with his cane, till he fell to the ground covered with blood. The landlord now accosted the Ensign to inform him, that the Englishman and his companions belonged to the Marquis of Villahermosa, who had a considerable seat in the neighbourhood. Don PAGOS returned for answer: "That he would teach the scoundrels
" to respect the king's uniform."

The

The Englishman, having somewhat recovered of the blows he had received, put his hand to his hanger to renew the attack, but the officer's servants seized him from behind, and with two blows laid him sprawling on the floor.

The three Spaniards, feeling their courage rather low, slipped out, and did not venture to return again. My mother returned to her carriage with Don PAGOS, and quietly continued her journey, leaving the defeated enemy on the ground. There was great reason to believe, that the four fellows had orders from their master to carry off my mother, who was under great apprehen-

sions of another assault. At last, they met Mr. Sheldon's valet, at the distance of half a league from *Madrid*, who had waited two days on the road, and now accompanied them to that city.

My mother took apartments at an hotel, in a distant quarter of the capital, that she might not be so easily discovered. Don PAGOS gave information to the Alguazils of the attack made upon him, and returned soon after to *Toledo*, to inform the Duke of all that had happened on the road. The latter praising his spirited conduct, made him a considerable present, and
promised

promised to be answerable himself for every further consequence.

The Marquis of VILLAHERMOSA firmly believed, that it was I who had ill treated his servant. Sir Ralph, my inveterate enemy, was of the same opinion, and with a thousand curses and imprecations swore to be revenged on me wherever he should find me. The Duke of LERIDA and Count ALCADOS, for the safety of my mother, resolved to go to *Madrid*, and as I did not betray the least symptom of fear, they permitted me to accompany them thither, with the friendly caution, to be

always on my guard, and very sparing of my visits to my mother.

I scrupulously followed their advice, and never saw my mother but in the evening, attended by Frederick. In all other respects, we seemed to be utter strangers to each other.

The Marquis of VILLAHERMOSA, actuated by secret motives of fear, began to despair of the good issue of his cause, and became inclined to compromise matters with the Duke. He availed himself of Lord Lovemore's proffered mediation, who came accordingly

ingly to make certain conciliatory overtures.

“ I advise you my Lord,” said his Grace, “ to wash your hands of this business. I cannot, at present, talk to you as largely upon the subject as I could wish ; but be sure, that, were I even to accept of your good offices, you would soon find, that you would have served yourself a very ill turn. Give me leave to tell you, that you do not know the man, in whose behalf you thus warmly interest yourself. Trust then to one, who loves and respects you, and

E 5

“ whom

“whom you shall know much better
“in course of time.”

His Lordship, highly pleased with this candid declaration, signified to the Duke his great embarrassment about the manner in which he should acquit himself towards the Marquis, to whom he certainly was under some sort of obligations.

“This manner,” replied the other,
“I am ready to point out to you
“immediately; the prosecution com-
“menced against you, on account of
“the unhappy affair with Count DE
“SESLÉ, is, you know it, entirely
“quashed.

“ quashed. Your parole of honour
“ to remain in this country till its
“ final issue, is therefore redeemed,
“ and you may choose any pretext to
“ return to *England*. You are now
“ arrived at an age, where you ought
“ to think of getting united with some
“ lovely and worthy object. If you
“ will trust to my experience and dis-
“ cernment to propose you one, you
“ shall receive her from my own hands,
“ and, I dare say, you will never re-
“ pent my choice.”

His Lordship returned many thanks
to the Duke for his kind intention and
offer, and took his leave of him, with

the resolution to return to *London* as soon as the letters which he expected from his sister, should have come to hand.

Pleased as I was at the conversation between the Duke and Lord LOVE-MORE, still I felt grieved at the latter's intended departure.

Meanwhile the letters from *London* did not arrive, and I flattered myself again with the probability of a farther prolongation of his Lordship's stay, when a fresh storm gathered over my head.

One

One evening, the palace of *Lerida* was all in an uproar. The Duke himself took me by the hand, and conducted me into his study: "Do you know," said he, "who is arrived?" "Lady VERNON. She is now at the English hotel, but she must do me the honour to make my house her home, and I have already sent the Count of ALCADOS to compliment her."

I was extremely alarmed at this news, as I saw that it would forthwith be impossible for me to avoid a discovery. I did not know, that the Duke had already laid a plan, which perfectly secured

cured me from all the dangers I dreaded.

By this time the Count returned with a message from her Ladyship, that she had accepted the Duke's gracious offer, and would in a few hours come herself to return him thanks. My two benefactors now left it at my option, either to avoid the sight of her Ladyship on her first entrance into the house, or to remain in my disguise, and boldly maintain the character I had assumed. Both of them thought the latter would be the best thing I could do. I was well aware, that my features had undergone too great a change in the space of between

tween four and five years to put me in danger of an immediate discovery, but I was grieved at the thought of concealing myself, even for a moment, from a friend who had always treated me with such tenderness. Hesitating therefore in the alternative, I promised to both to follow their advice, and retiring to my apartment, wrote the following lines :

“ To Lady VERNON.

“ My Lady,

“ If you do not wish my death, have
“ compassion on me, dissemble, and
“ continue to love

“ Your MIRA.”

Her

Her Ladyship came at night, when the house was crowded with the Duke's friends. At the light of torches and tapers objects may easily be confounded, and the ceremonies of a first reception will easily put a Lady out of countenance. I am certain, she did not observe me in the general bustle. I addressed her maids in English, and delivering to one of them my note properly sealed, begging her to deliver it to her lady as coming from Mrs. Hepburne, who had charged me to convey it.

My scheme was perfectly successful. As the Duke presented me the following

ing

ing morning to my Lady as a *Livonian* Count in the Spanish service, she displayed an admirable share of composure, nor was I any way deficient in acting my part. There was no surprise, no doubts, no scruples. Our first looks met in unison together, and we immediately began a lively conversation upon an indifferent subject, none but ourselves could understand our respective repartees, and the Duke, with a vast deal of good humour, joined us in the joke.

“ I hope,” said he, to Lady Vernon,
“ that should your Ladyship wish to
“ bestow your heart upon somebody,
“ you

“ you will choose the object in my family ; I do not think, you hate our young foreigner here.”

“ Does your Grace know,” replied she, “ why I was staring so much at him ? It is because there are some features in his countenance that are not strange to me, though I cannot identify them as to the person.”

“ You are not the first,” continued the Duke, “ who makes this remark. Some people indeed take the young gentleman for a lady, because there is a resemblance between him and
“ the

“ the deceased daughter of Mrs. HEP-
“ BURNE.”

“ You are right, my Lord, the gen-
“ tleman is really very like poor Mira !
“ Indeed I could not recollect. But
“ your Grace should not have re-
“ minded me of her loss, for I loved
“ the poor thing so dearly ! No never—
“ never shall I forget her. But what
“ is become of her mother ? Is she still
“ at Barcelona ? I once wrote to her at
“ that place, but it is many months
“ ago.”

“ She is much nearer,” answered the
Duke, “ and I expect her every moment
“ in

“ in this apartment, as I am just informed of her return from Madrid.”

Now I withdrew to meet my mother. FREDERICK not being in the way, I trusted to my regimentals, left the palace, and endeavoured to gain a street which led me straight to her lodgings.

I had not walked many steps before I fell in with Sir Ralph, my death-fiend. I boldly strutted along, when he made a pause, recognized and came up to me. He followed me to facing the door of the house in which he lived, and attempted to drag me in. I struggled, drew my sword, cut him across the face, and
felled

felled him senseless to the ground, where I left him weltering in blood, and returned home with the utmost precipitation.

I ran up stairs to inform the Duke of my adventure, and found that my mother was arrived before me. The Duke, on hearing my story, commended my spirit, but desired me to deny the fact, if any farther inquiry should happen to be made. I had no occasion for such denial, since Sir RALPH had sufficient reason not to tell any body of whom he had received a scar, which he took with him to the grave. His resentment, however, daily increased within his breast,
and

and he took every means in his power to perpetuate it in that of the Marquis.

Very few persons were fond of me, but the number of those who meditated to do me injury, was very great indeed. Lady VERNON seeing the dangers I ran, deemed it necessary to concert proper measures with me to defeat the machinations of my 'persecutors. To this effect she gave orders to one of her servants to deliver me the following note :

“ It is absolutely necessary we should
“ have a private interview. At any
“ hour of the night, the most convenient to yourself, you will find the
“ door

“ door of my bed-chamber open, and
“ myself ready to receive you.”

Judge with what rapture I received this invitation. My heart wanted so much to effuse its various sensations, and it was long since I had embraced my bosom friend ; I knew that she still continued to cherish me most tenderly, but I too wanted to convince her, that the power of my attachment had never abated.

Midnight came, and every body having retired to rest, I stole, as unheard as unperceived, to the door of Lady Vernon's bed-chamber, which flew wide open

open at my approach. After exchanging the careffes of affection and tender friendship, she led me to a fopha, on which having fat down, her Ladyship informed me, that Sir RALPH, attributing the wound in his face to a fall from his horfe, had returned with Lord LOVEMORE to the feat of Villahermosa. His Lordship absolutely declined taking any part in the plans of revenge projected by the Knight, and his foul, fwayed by sweeter and fofter propenfities, feemed to be fmitten with the charms of Donna AVILA, the Marquis's fifter. The Marquis himfelf left nothing undone to bring about a marriage, but Mr. SHELDON constantly laboured to
coun-

counteract his designs. Lady VERNON did not herself approve of this new courtship, and asked me, while avowing these sentiments, whether or not I knew the young, handsome, and rich bride, related to the Duke, who had promised her to Lord LOVEMORE, though without the most distant hint for him to guess who it could be.

Self-love felt itself sensibly hurt at such a question, as I knew that her Ladyship could not be ignorant of my being related to his Grace. Nevertheless, I answered, with great composure, that I was as much in the dark as she was.— She begged me to bestow some atten-

tion on this subject, adding, that the Duke fully deserved her warmest interest in such a concern. She farther told me, that it would give her great pleasure to have some more interviews of this kind with me ; but as she did not like to trust her servants, she would give me a signal for coming to her bed-chamber at night, by letting something drop on the ground in my presence. She concluded, by exhorting me to be on my guard against Sir Ralph and the Marquis, whom she knew capable to do me all the harm they possibly could, and requested me to intreat my mother to have a watchful eye upon the lurking spies

spies and bravoos who surrounded her from all quarters.

I took a tender farewell, threw myself on my bed, and shed a flood of bitter tears. Although her Ladyship's friendly assurances ought to have consoled me, yet overwhelmed with an anguish I had never felt, I thought my heart would break. Donna AVILA, with her pretensions, was constantly hovering on my mind, and small as my rights were, I did not like to see others avail themselves, at my expence, of their own.

The Duke now took us with him on an excursion to his estates at *Lerida*.

My mother, to avoid the snares laid to enthrall her, also left *Madrid*, and returned to *Barcelona*. Before our departure, we received intelligence of a dispute between the Countess of MONT-ALVA and the Marquis her nephew.—The latter suspected the Countess of being leagued against him with the Duke. The Countess, endeavouring to benefit her daughter by this circumstance, wrote a long epistle to his Grace, in which she purely requested a few lines, in his own hand-writing, to refute the calumnious assertions of her detractor. The Duke was reluctant to doing any thing in the matter; but I wrote, under hand, a letter to the Countess, desiring her to come to
Lerida,

Lerida, where she would soon persuade his Grace to subscribe to all her wishes.

The Countess actually arrived, under the pretence of a visit to Lady VERNON, whose acquaintance she had already made at *Madrid*, and by dint of adulation and artifice she prevailed at last on the Duke to be on as good terms with her as before the marriage of his son to Donna STELLA, her daughter.

Although Montalva was past the meridian of life, she still harboured an uncommon propensity to love intrigues and gallantry, and the DUKE being equally

fond of a good joke, found in this an opportunity of indulging his mirth.

To render this manœuvre the more complete, his Grace desired me to wait on the Countess as long as she should remain at his house. This proposal turned out very much to my advantage and entertainment, and I soon acted the part of a love-sick spark, whom Lady VERNON, by her caresses and advances, only seemed to importune, while my love was to be directed to a quite different object. The old Countess began to kindle with jealousy at her Ladyship, whose fondness only served to increase the confidence of the former.—

The

The Countess now gave me some hopes of my being able to hit upon an expedient to undermine Lord LOVEMORE's partiality to Donna AVILA, whom she too had described to me as dangerous. Lady VERNON, who knew Donna AVILA as a gamester and a prodigal, took an open and warm part in our plans.

For some time, however, all our attempts to detach his Lordship from this new favourite, proved fruitless. He was no stranger to her predominant vices; she cajoled him out of all the money she could find upon him, cheated him publicly at play, and laughed at him afterwards for his silliness; but

this indifference to his interest was so artfully seasoned with the most refined coquetry, that his Lordship found motives for liking her, even in the good grace with which she indulged in those vicious and hateful excesses.

Mr. SHELDON, alarmed at seeing his friend give way to a connection which visibly threatened him with ruin, expostulated warmly upon the subject, and swore to take his leave of him for ever, if he did not immediately renounce all farther intercourse with DONNA AVILA, quit *Toledo*, and come to us at *Lerida*.

This

This circumstance also gave infinite pain to Lady VERNON. She now considered her brother as a lost man, and having found an opportunity of intercepting the letter containing his remittances, she thought it the best means of disuniting him and the lady, by obliging him to abandon her from want of money. She knew, however, that Donna AVILA had long been waiting for the arrival of Lord LOVEMORE's cash, and that a momentary failure of its remittance could not make that impression which we wished. For this reason, we all deemed it proper to think of some other and more effective con-

trivance to accomplish the meditated purpose.

An annual fair, which was then about to be held at a village adjacent to Toledo, seemed to afford no unfavourable opportunity of executing such a project. We had previous advice, that the whole family of *Villabermosa* always made it a point to be at that fair, dressed out in all the splendour of their station; and the great concourse of visitors from the surrounding districts, which by multiplying the number of objects, tended at the same time to bring them into confusion, could not but

but facilitate an attempt of a similar description.

There was a variety of reasons, which made me choose this period, to keep myself, as much as possible, concealed; but I was determined to take a leading part in every enterprise. Nothing had been easier, than for the Marquis's servants to have recognized me, had their attention been less occupied by other objects. Their master had vowed my destruction, and Mr. SHELDON assured me, that nothing but accident, or my good fortune, had hitherto made me escape from a variety of unknown snares that had been laid for me.

Meanwhile the Marquis's state of health bordered on the verge of total decline. It was impossible for him to survive much longer; and it would have been an unpardonable act of imprudence in me to run such an hazard, since his death would rid me at once of every difficulty.

The fair was uncommonly splendid, and overflowed with visitors of all ranks and stations. Among these a crowd of adventurers, sharpers and gamblers, was the most conspicuous. Lady VERNON attended in the uniform of a British officer, and I, having given myself a fallow and tawny complexion with
the

the juice squeezed out of a plant, waited upon the Countess of MONTALVA as a Moorish page.

We played off our manœuvre with a success surpassing our most sanguine expectations. We found the company from *Villabermosa* with Lord LOVEMORE, seated round a faro-table. Good luck and some knowledge of the game were much in our favour; in less than half an hour the Countess of MONTALVA had won upwards of ninety *doubloons*, she then threw up her cards, and with an air of contempt told the company, that she scorned to play for such pitiful stakes. Donna AVILA, who knew the Countess,

Countess, and was much embittered against her, now begged Lord LOVE-MORE to advance her ninety doubloons more; but his Lordship, finding his purse too low to answer such a demand, was obliged to refuse the fair gamester, who, provoked at such unexpected usage, put on furious looks, and abused her lover with all the vehemence and vulgarity of a fishwoman, declaring, amongst other things, with an illiberality that perfectly matched her ignorance, that the English nobility were nothing but a set of *stingy, beggarly fellows*. His Lordship, less aggravated at the loss he had sustained, than enraged at the opprobrious treatment he met with

with on the part of his termagant lady, and forgetting, for a moment, the character of his nation, the dignity of his rank, and the sex of his reviler, gave Donna AVILA a sound smack on the face, and thus dissolved all farther connexions.

Don AVILA, her brother, wanted to take his sister's part, but Lord LOVE-MORE dismissed him with a few words, left the company without bidding them adieu, and returned that same night to *Toledo*.

The friends of the Marquis of Villahermosa, disappointed in their greedy hopes

hopes of gain, now began to vent all their spleen upon the Countess of *Montalva*, and suspecting the English officer that accompanied her, they sent off an express to inform the Marquis of what had happened. The latter, more credulous than his relations, cherished an inward sense of conviction, that the Englishman in regimentals could be no other but that MIRA, after whom he had made so many useless pursuits.

As we were, on our return to *Lecrida*, stopping at an inn to water our horses, we found ourselves quickly surrounded by a set of ill-looking people, who wanted to prevent our departure.

We

We had no prospect of extricating ourselves, otherwise than by a brave and spirited resistance, and to this we were determined, having a number of the Duke's stoutest and truest servants in our suit.

Lady VERNON having a brace of the best English pistols in her pocket, and one of the banditti seizing her by the arm to drag her into another room, she immediately pulled out one, and shot him dead on the spot; another bravo attempting to approach her Ladyship, she presented the other pistol, and thus kept him at bay, while I and the servants, hearing the report of firing, drew

our

our cutlasses, and gave ourselves vent among the desperate crew. The villains, disconcerted at such a reception, stole away one after another, and quietly left us masters of the field, on which we continued our journey to *Lerida*.

I understood afterwards, from some words which her Ladyship dropped in conversation, that the attack was intended against me, for which reason the Countess of MONTALVA, who was quite in love with me, expressed the greatest uneasiness. As she thought every moment of my stay at *Lerida* would endanger my safety, she proposed to me
soon

soon after, to go with her to *Barcelona*, and from thence secretly to set off for *Paris*, on a visit to her daughter, who, by that time, would have probably been delivered of an heir or an heiress. She added, that the Duke could have no objection to our taking a trip to *Barcelona*.

I was, in this respect, quite of the same opinion, but could not, at such a juncture, quit Lady VERNON, and lose sight of her brother. Thus I begged the Countess to permit me to suspend my resolution, till I should have consulted my most intimate friends at *Lerida*. A few leagues farther on the road,

road, the Count of ALCADOS met us, with the pleasing intelligence of Lord Lovemore's arrival at *Lerida*, from whence he intended to go to *Cadiz*, and to embark for *London*, as soon as he should have had some conversation with his sister.

The Count added, that the Marquis of Villahermosa's health was grown so very bad, that he was not expected to live another month; that Lord LOVEMORE and Mr. Sheldon were good friends again; and, at last, he whispered to me, that the DUKE would take care to put off the departure of Lady VERNON and her brother, but
that

that our common interest required me to make a temporary visit to my mother at *Barcelona*. I replied, that the Countess of MONTALVA had suggested a similar plan to me for personal safety, and that I was quite ready to obey his Grace's friendly directions. It was now decided between us, that I should affect indisposition immediately on my arrival, to avoid, without impropriety, seeing his Lordship.

In the first bustle, which our arrival occasioned among the company at the Duke's mansion, I fortunately escaped notice. On the road, I had already complained of a violent head-ach to
the

Countess of MONTALVA, and now I went immediately to bed. This enamoured lady hastened to procure me every relief which medical assistance could grant, and would not quit my bedside. I covered my head with the bed-clothes, ordered the curtains to be let down, and hoped in this manner to be spared from all farther intrusion.

But I was mistaken in my supposition; every visitor in the house came to see the patient, and Lord Lovemore and his sister were among the first who entered my chamber to enquire how I was. He was introduced by the Duke himself, who wished, he said, to make
him

him acquainted with me. His Lordship expressed, in a few words, his regret at my illness, and my heart went pit-a-pat all the while he stayed in the room ; but when he even spoke to me, my tongue denied its office, I trembled, and his Grace, perceiving my embarrassment, withdrew with his noble guest, assuring me of his best wishes for my speedy recovery, as he wanted me to accompany the Countess of *Montalva* on her journey to *Barcelona*.

Lady VERNON remained some time longer, to give me the gladsome intelligence, that she entertained the greatest hopes of her brother's letting the Duke direct

direct him in the choice of a spouse, and that every thing being likely to be arranged in the course of the approaching winter, they had put off their return to *England* till spring.

The Countess of MONTALVA now acquainted her Ladyship with her intention of taking me to *Paris*, to bring back her daughter. Lady VERNON promised her every assistance in her power to effect a reconciliation between the Duke and the Marquis, her son-in-law. The Count of ALCADOS to whom I communicated the Countess's project, told me after a pause: " You will do
" well to go to *Paris*, but let not the
" young

“ young couple return to *Spain*, before
“ I shall write to you farther on the
“ subject. Your going to Paris with
“ the Countess is a very good thing, as
“ you may keep her there, till every
“ thing shall be settled here.”

Having thus adjusted matters, I waited the hour of our departure with great impatience. The Countess, who seemed to be as much in love as a girl of sixteen, would never leave me, for fear of being supplanted by some younger and handsomer rival. The preparations for our journey were soon made, my head-ach vanished by de-

grees, and, two days after, we set out to *Barcelona*.

It may easily be imagined with what pleasure our mother received us. She had not forgotten her benefactress, and could not but rejoice at the sight of her sister. They gave tears to the memory of the Marchioness of *Villabermosa*, in which I spontaneously joined them, while the Countess ascribed my grief to the sole sympathy of a delicate and generous heart. They also talked of poor *Mira*, and lamented her too early death. The Countess was so well pleased at *Barcelona*, as to remain there a whole fortnight.

I had

I had now attained my nineteenth year, the term which expands the blossoms of youthful prime into ripened puberty; but I could neither tell who I was, nor who were my parents. The vicissitudes to which such an uncertainty had exposed me, only served to make me the more desirous of unravelling this mystery, and I resolved to improve this happy juncture to learn all I could from my mother. But I resolved in vain! She only answered me with tears and prayers not to importune her any farther, but wait, with patience, a little longer, as the happy period of discovery was fast approaching.

We travelled on to *Paris*, where we found the Marchioness of LERIDA had presented her husband with a fine and healthy young heir. I hastened to inform the Duke of this lucky event, who sent me a very flattering answer to the following purport :

“ Dear Captain,

“ The news you sent me, gives me
“ a great deal of pleasure. I will now
“ be even with you, and you will tell
“ me how you feel. You always testi-
“ fied some concern at the fate of poor
“ Mira ; but you must know she has
“ made her resurrection from the dead,
“ calls

“ calls herself Donna MARIANNA, and
“ belongs to my family !”

“ To his family ?” cried the Countess, with astonishment, and paused a few moments—“ To be sure the Duke’s
“ younger sister’s name was Donna MARIANNA, who had been clandestinely
“ married to a brother of Count ALCADOS. Should then MIRA be the
“ fruit of that union ? If she were, I
“ would embrace the poor dear child,
“ and glory in her happiness.”

I had perused the latter part of the Duke’s letter trembling in every limb, but these words of the Countess forced

a flood of tears from my bewildered eyes ; I was a going to faint, when snatching me up in her arms, she said :
“ I guess your secret and your tears. I
“ have long since had a presentiment
“ of all this. You are that Donna
“ Marianna yourself !”

“ Yes, Madam,” replied I, “ but
“ pardon me”—

Here, both the Countess and her daughter embraced me, and complained of my having thus long withheld my confidence from them.

The
book :

The intimacy, in which we now lived together at *Paris*, began to increase every day. Young LERIDA, wallowing in dissipation, left us always alone, and behaved with such wild inconsistency, that I still congratulated myself on having escaped being his wife.

I received a letter from Lady VERNON, informing me, that all the property left me by the late Marchioness of VILLAHERMOSA was perfectly secured; and that the Duke had lately discovered to her, that I was the offspring of a lawful though clandestine union between his family and that of ALCADOS, and that she really believed,

his Grace meant to give me away to her brother.

The Countess of MONTALVA was very glad to find herself right in her suppositions, and promised me, to be always the tenderest and kindest friend and relative.

Mrs. HEPBURN, who had been obliged to go to *Madrid*, on account of the last will of our late benefactress, always returned me the same answers to my urgent and eager questions respecting my family concerns : “ Why, my “ best loved Mira,” wrote she, “ would “ you have me rob a man, to whom
“ we

“ we are both infinitely obliged, of the
“ pleasure of a discovery, which he re-
“ served to himself as the sole reward
“ for all his kindness. It was not for
“ nothing, that he called you his dear
“ child and daughter. He demands
“ obedience and submission. A gene-
“ rous heart finds its happiness in that
“ of its friends, and surprise constitutes
“ the highest pitch of joy.”—In another
letter she added what follows: “ I will
“ so far comply with your pressing so-
“ licitations, as to inform you, that
“ Donna MARIANNA, the youngest
“ sister of the Duke of Lerida, whom
“ the Countess took for your mother,
“ had already been dead three years

“before you was born. Let this satisfy
“you for the present, and you will not
“do amiss to let the Countess remain
“in her sweet illusion.”

Thus Mrs. Hepburne subverted, in
a few words, a structure, which had cost
my imagination so much time and trou-
ble, and I was as deeply in the dark as
ever. But I felt such filial emotions for
the Duke, who had overwhelmed me
with incessant benefits, that I came to
a resolution of dropping all farther en-
quiries, till he should himself judge
proper to give me some kind of ecclair-
cissement.

Agreeable

Agreeable to Mrs. Hepburne's suggestion, I did not undeceive the Countess of MONTALVA and her daughter, but seemed rather to be of the same opinion as they.

Meanwhile some letters were received by Donna STELLA from the Duke, in which he called her his daughter, and expressed a wish to see her and his grand-child in Spain ; but he made no mention whatever of his dissipated and ungrateful son. He requested the Countess and his daughter to supply me with a complete wardrobe, and every thing that was necessary for a lady of quality, previous to our departure, and to say

on their return, that the foreign young officer had left them to return to his country. All this portended to me, that the mystery of my birth was in a fair way of being soon unravelled.

The young Marquis of LERIDA continued all the time to sow his wild oats, and indulged himself in a thousand boyish excesses, which made us resolve upon some plan to send him to *Barcelona*. From his puerile disposition, we found no difficulty to accomplish our design. To excuse his abrupt departure, among our acquaintance, we made them believe, that owing to the intelligence of his father's being on the point of death, he

he had not had time to take leave of any body.

We spent the winter very agreeably at *Paris*, and when spring drew near, went to *Marseilles*, hired a ship for our own convenience to carry us to *Barcelona*, and after a pleasant passage, went on shore and took possession of some apartments at Mrs. COLLINSON's, whom we had previously informed of our coming.

The Marchioness found her consort here, very much altered for the better. She forgave him, in a most lovely manner, all his past unkindness and neglect,
and

and he appeared for a good while after, to persevere in his reformed course.

The Governor of Barcelona, to whom the Duke had strongly recommended us, gave us a most polite and splendid reception, and procured us all the pleasures and amusements, that so rich and populous a city can afford.

Our reception at *Madrid* by the Duke of LERIDA was one of the most solemn and most touching that can possibly be witnessed. The Countess of MONTALVA first presented her daughter, who kneeled to his Grace with the little infant in her arms. He raised her from
the

the carpet, embraced her, then took the little bantling in his arms, kissed him an hundred times, and shewed him to the company, while tears of sensibility streamed from his eyes.

The Marquis, his son, seemed to care as little about this moving spectacle, as about the cold and frigid reception which he met with on the part of his father. He had completely relapsed into his former foppishness and insignificance, and was walking up and down between two large pier glasses, to dandle with his ruffles, and to admire his steps. He then accosted Lady VERNON, and complimented her with the attitudes

attitudes and gestures of a dancing-master, but her Ladyship imitating his father's example, gave him likewise a very cool reception.

The Count of ALCADOS was then the first that came to bid me welcome ; his heart spoke from his lips, and he rejoiced, as usual, to see his dear daughter. No father could ever love his child more tenderly than he loved me.

To attempt a description of what I felt when Lady VERNON gave me the embrace of welcome, would be a task far exceeding my power. She knew the secret recesses of my heart, and our meeting

ing was that of two fond sisters. The friendship between two souls so congenial, possesses properties superior to love itself.

Several days passed without my seeing the Countess of MONTALVA or her daughter. Myself obliged to keep my apartment, on account of an indisposition, I was sensible that the former must be too busy with their own family concerns, and I did not repine at their indispensable absence.

Towards the close of the third day, the Countess came to apologize to me for her seeming neglect; she told me,
that

that the Duke would give a grand supper the following night, to which some of the first nobility had been invited ; and that agreeable to etiquette, his Grace had appointed her to introduce me. She added, that she was sure I should like the *fete* very much, and find many of her former predictions fulfilled.

These mysterious words quite struck me. Mrs. Hepburne, whom I also found at *Madrid*, and who still continued to treat me as her daughter, had already the day before given me an obscure hint of what was about to happen.

All

All the next day was spent till evening in a thousand preparations, to make my appearance as brilliant as possible. I had never before consulted the glass with such nice care. I strove to eclipse in splendor all the company ; jewels, the richest and most beautiful dress, in short, every thing served to heighten my natural attractions, and from the applause which accompanied my subsequent reception, I concluded that the pains I took had not been misbestowed. The Countess and her daughter were equally diligent at the toilet, and when we entered the Duke's drawing-room, the whole assembly, who seemed to have waited for us with impatience, received

us with every mark of applause and admiration. As the Countess and her daughter were generally known, I was the only person who chiefly attracted the eyes of the whole company ; and they asked, whispering one another, what could be my name.

“ This young lady,” said the Duke, who took me by the hand, and presented me to his guests, “ is a relation of mine, “ though some family reasons have hitherto obliged her to dwell in retirement. I present her to you, as the daughter of the Count of ALCADOS, my friend, and of Donna MARIANA, late Marchioness Dowager of
“ VILLA-

“ VILLAHERMOSA, and as the offspring
“ of a lawful but secret marriage.”

At these words, a secret whispering pervaded the whole room, but I could not make any sense of it, as I fainted away as soon as I heard the Duke utter the name of my benefactress, who now appeared to have been my mother.— It was several minutes before I recovered my senses ; all the ladies surrounded me, and the Duke intreating me to be of good cheer, continued thus :

“ It was necessary to conceal from
“ this lady the name of her parents, as
“ the late Marquis of VILLAHERMOSA
“ had

“ had appointed her mother sole guardian of his son, and executrix of his last will during her widowhood.—
“ The promulgation of her second marriage would therefore have necessarily involved her into disputes and difficulties with the other branches of her first husband’s family.”

The whole assembly praised these wise precautions, and congratulated me upon my new title of Countess of **ALCADOS**.

This unexpected discovery gave such a shock to my health, that it was found necessary to put me to bed. **Mrs. HEP-**

BURNE

BURNE came to remain with me, and as soon as I felt myself better, I reminded her of the promise she had made to give me an account of all the particulars attending my birth. She readily complied, and began as follows :

“ After the death of the Marquis of
“ VILLAHERMOSA, the Marchioness,
“ finding the whole incumbrance of family affairs, and the education of her
“ son, entirely burdened upon herself,
“ thought immediately of looking out
“ for a supporter. Him she soon found
“ in the Count of ALCADOS, whom,
“ with the advice of the Duke of LE-
“ RIDA, she married a few years after
“ her

“ her husband’s death, on condition of
“ their union being kept secret, on
“ account of the late Marquis’s will.

“ The nuptial ceremony was solem-
“ nized in the most private manner, so
“ that I myself knew nothing of the
“ event till several months after, when
“ the Marchioness confidentially told me
“ she was pregnant. This circumstance
“ involved her into the greatest embar-
“ rassment, from which, however, the
“ arrival of my husband fortunately ex-
“ tricated her. Then I feigned to be
“ pregnant, and openly boasted of it
“ as long as Mr. HEPBURN remained
“ with me at *Madrid*. Physicians were
“ called,

“ called, who prescribed a quantity of
“ medicines, which I secretly conveyed
“ to your mother. This pretended
“ pregnancy made my husband so dis-
“ contented with his circumscribed
“ situation, as to induce him to try to
“ seek his fortune in *America*.

“ One night, the Marchioness felt
“ all the symptoms of approaching
“ child-birth ; one of her confidential
“ maids and I gave her all the assistance
“ we could to deliver her. I was the
“ first who took you into my arms,
“ flew to my apartment, went to-bed,
“ and shammed to suffer the throes of
VOL. II. H travail.

“ travail. My moans disturbed the
“ family, who hastened to my relief,
“ but before they had time to enter the
“ apartment, they found me already
“ delivered. A wet-nurse was imme-
“ diately fetched, to whom I delivered
“ you, after having embraced you num-
“ berless times with all the fondness of
“ a maternal heart.

“ Your mother, somewhat terrified
“ at my shrieks, felt a slight access of
“ fever, which gave me an opportu-
“ nity of leaving my bed earlier than
“ usual, to give her all the relief in my
“ power. This scheme went off so cle-
“ verly,

“ verly, that nobody in the house con-
“ ceived the smallest suspicion.

“ All the rest you know yourself, ex-
“ cept that Mr. HEPBURNE, who had
“ perceived a great intimacy between
“ me and the Count of ALCADOS,
“ which was nothing but the result of
“ our common secret, took it into his
“ head, after his return to *London*,
“ from *America*, to suspect my conju-
“ gal fidelity, and to consider you as a
“ bastard. As I knew his indiscretion,
“ I could not entrust him with a secret
“ I had vowed not to reveal, nor con-
“ sequently cure him of that jealousy,
“ which was then deeply rooted in his
H 2 “ heart ;

“ heart ; and when I saw you grieved
“ at the ill treatment you experienced
“ on his part, I had no other means to
“ console you, than to let you know
“ part of the truth, without divulging
“ any of its more essential circum-
“ stances.”

Here she concluded her account, and I assured her, with a thousand caresses, that I would never forget the many obligations I owed to her truly maternal care and solicitude. The Countess of MONTALVA now came to interrupt us, with the news of Sir RALPH RANDALL's death at *Barcelona*, in consequence of the
severe

severe treatment he received from some bravoës in a house of ill fame.

Lord LOVEMORE returned at this period from *Barcelona*, whither he went to wait the arrival of some letters from *England*, with the consent of his family to his intended marriage. Lady VERNON, the Duke of Lerida, Mrs. HEPBURN, my father and Mr. Sheldon, were all assembled to receive him, while the Countess of MONTALVA and her daughter had orders to divert me in my apartment. At last the Duke sent for me, and on entering the drawing-room, my heart bounded with joy at seeing his Lordship, whose hand the Duke put

put into mine, wishing us all the happiness and bliss that life could afford. After being solemnly betrothed, it was settled between our friends that our marriage should be solemnized quite privately at *Lerida*, by the Chaplain of the British Ambassador, and according to the rites of the church of *England*, to which I had been brought up, by the express desire of my father, who, though a Spaniard, was a sworn enemy to the pitiful superstitions of the church of *Rome*, and a Protestant in his heart.

A few weeks after our union, the Marquis of VILLAHERMOSA died, and

I suc-

I succeeded to my mother's property, without any farther trouble.

We then agreed with our friends to reside alternately one twelvemonth in Spain and one in *England*, whither my father always accompanied us.

I have written this part of my life, to teach my sex that patience and perseverance in any rational plan, are sufficient to vanquish all obstacles; that misfortune always borders near upon happiness; and that, though little favoured by the splendor of birth or the abundance of wealth, we may, with good sense and equanimity, weather out
the

the most violent storms of adverse fate,
and safely reach at last the desired har-
bour. This is what I have experienced
under the manifold vicissitudes of my
eventful career, nor do I believe there
is a being that ever felt so forcibly the
truth of these beautiful lines of an im-
mortal bard :

- " Intrust thy fortune to the powers above,
- " Leave them to manage for thee, and to grant
- " What their unerring wisdom sees thee want:
- " In goodness as in greatness they excel,
- " Ah! that we lov'd ourselves but half so well."



